

and about 2,000 members will take part in the athletic sports and matches.

LIVERPOOL.

Diminished Diarrhoea Mortality.—The Workhouse Hospital.—Opening of the Thompson-Yates Laboratories.

THE weekly report of the medical officer of health points to a notable improvement as regards the incidence of diarrhoea on the population. The total number of deaths from that cause during the week ending August 13th was 87, against 241 in the corresponding week last year. The improvement is attributed to the cleaner state of the streets, which is largely the direct consequence of the abundant water supply which the city enjoys, and also to the activity of the newly-appointed female sanitary inspectors who are busily engaged in teaching the dwellers in the poorer districts how to feed their children properly. Medical men who see much of the poor are well aware of the astonishing amount of ignorance which prevails among the working classes as to the kind of food a young child requires and is capable of assimilating, and there can be little doubt that improper feeding is largely responsible for the occurrence of diarrhoea, and for the feeble resistance which its victims offer to it. The presence of educated and sympathetic women in the homes of the poor seems to offer the best hope of overcoming this ignorance, and Dr. Hope cordially acknowledges the value of the services which the female inspectors are rendering in this connection. Of the present staff of female inspectors the greater number have been trained by the Liverpool Ladies' Sanitary Association, a society whose existence and usefulness have previously been noticed in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*. It is much to be hoped that the good work which this Society has commenced will be continued in future, but it is to be regretted that those responsible for its management have not yet brought out the syllabus for next session, nor even intimated whether any classes will be held at all. The propagation of knowledge as to the value of vaccination and revaccination affords a wide field for the activity of female sanitary inspectors. This comparative immunity from diarrhoea has been maintained during the following two weeks.

At a recent meeting of the Liverpool Workhouse Committee, an interesting discussion arose in connection with the returns of the number of inmates, which showed an increase of 159 as compared with the corresponding week last year. The increase was mainly in patients in the hospital, a circumstance which seems to indicate that the prejudice which prevents so many of the sick poor from accepting rate-paid medical relief is less active than it used to be. This Mr. Rathbone considered to be highly satisfactory, because the sooner the poor are cured the sooner they will be able to resume work.

The formal opening of the Thompson-Yates Laboratories of Physiology and Pathology will take place on October 8th, the ceremony being performed by Lord Lister, who will deliver an address in the afternoon at University College. In the morning a meeting of the senate of Victoria University will be held in St. George's Hall, for the purpose of conferring an honorary degree of Doctor on Lord Lister. In the evening Lord Lister will be entertained at dinner by the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor. A large number of men eminent in medicine and the allied sciences in various parts of the world have accepted invitations to take part in the various ceremonies.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SELF-INDUCED INSTRUMENTAL ABORTION.

SIR,—In the recent trial *Regina v. Collins*, I believe it was stated in court that it was impossible for a woman to pass an uterine sound upon herself. Now, I know of at least three cases in which a metal catheter has been passed in this way, and in one I was called in to the assistance of the woman, who informed me that she had bought a metal catheter from a man (whose name she would not divulge), who gave her full instructions as to the procedure. She said: "I first boil the catheter, then soak it in one part of carbolic acid added to forty parts of water, then oil it, and pass it in. He told me that I should turn it round once or twice; but I don't do this;

but if blood does not come I use it again. There is no danger. The only difference is that I feel a cold sensation and want of feeling at the bottom of my stomach."

I found the patient bleeding profusely and some placental material projecting through the os uteri. I could not remove this easily, and the patient asked me to "just put in a little hook and take it away." I refused, and called in the assistance of an obstetric physician, who dilated and removed the uterine contents.

I may say that this patient had previously to buying the catheter been in the habit of injecting water into the uterine cavity by an apparatus bought abroad, and she was thus to an extent an adept.

It has occurred to me that, as such practices are possible, the profession may be at the mercy of any unprincipled woman who chooses to induce her own abortion instrumentally and then call in a medical man; and the question one asks oneself is, what would be the position of a doctor who had been so called in in the event of death occurring and upon a *post-mortem* examination being made some perforation or other injury to the uterus were discovered.

In the absence of any evidence from the husband (who may be cognisant or not) would not suspicion point to the doctor last in attendance?—I am, etc.,

Aug. 23rd.

EDIN.

THE VACCINATION SURRENDER.

SIR,—I hope that the members of the Association will not be encouraged by the letter of Mr. Nelson Hardy in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of August 13th to make what looks very much like a personal attack on Sir Walter Foster for the action he took in connection with the Vaccination Bill. Mr. Hardy seems to forget that the course taken by Sir Walter Foster was practically endorsed not only by all the medical members in the House of Commons, but by Lord Lister in the House of Lords. That a concession of some kind had to be made to determined objectors to infant vaccination is admitted by all who have any knowledge of the state of feeling in the country, and especially in some of the larger towns, on the subject. I venture to think that I am in as good a position to speak in regard to it as anyone considering the communications which I daily receive from all parts of the kingdom. The blunder that has been made was not in accepting the principle of Sir Walter Foster's proposal, but in failing to qualify it by a proviso that the relaxation of the law which he proposed should be only a temporary one, and that the liability of the child should revive when it reached the school age. This is the converse which was urged by the Committee of the Jenner Society before the Vaccination Bill was brought in; but the Government refused to accept it, and lost the opportunity of doing so when Mr. Balfour made his unfortunate surrender.

For my own part, I have no hesitation in expressing my belief that the cause of vaccination would, on the whole, gain greatly if the age of compulsion had been extended at once to 4 years. But, however this may be, I am in a position to state that a leading member of the Conservative party in the House of Commons was on the point of rising to propose the addition of such a proviso as I have suggested—which would probably have secured the support of the large majority of both sides of the House—when unfortunately Mr. Balfour jumped up and, on the part of the Government, practically accepted Sir Walter Foster's proposal *en bloc*. Then, to use a vulgar expression, "all the fat was in the fire"; the mischief was done, and the only possibility of averting it was by independent action in the House of Lords. Here, again, unfortunately circumstances were against us. The Bill was pushed on by the Government with such rapidity that before any effort could be made to take the opinion of the House of Lords on this point the opportunity was lost.

But, whatever we may think of the want of tact and forethought which caused this catastrophe, it would be most unjust to make Sir Walter Foster—with whom we must all sympathise in the sad loss he has just experienced—specially responsible for a policy in which he was supported to a certain extent not only by all the medical members of the Legislature but by the expressed opinion of the Council of the British Medical Association itself.—I am, etc.,

Gloucester.

FRANCIS T. BOND.